

**Statement of
Congressman Steve Cohen
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
10/29/2019**

I would like to thank Chairwoman Haaland and the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands for holding a legislative hearing on HR 3250, the Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools Study Act.

I am pleased to have co-introduced this bill with Rep. Danny Davis of Rosenwald's hometown of Chicago, and its Senate sponsor, Dick Durbin of Illinois.

The measure begins the process of establishing a national historic park to honor the life and legacy of Julius Rosenwald, a successful entrepreneur and renowned philanthropist who made lasting contributions to the advancement of African American education during the twentieth century.

Rosenwald, the president and chairman of the board of Sears, Roebuck and Company, created the Julius Rosenwald Foundation "for the betterment of mankind" in 1917.

As the top Sears executive, he established the company's pledge of "satisfaction guaranteed or your money back."

His foundation, which gave more than \$63 million in charity in his lifetime, partnered with local communities to create over 5,300 schools in the South to address the lack of education for African Americans.

The Rosenwald Foundation also supported the early NAACP cases that eventually led to *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, ending the "separate but equal" doctrine and segregation in public schools.

The foundation also supported a number of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), including Fisk, Dillard, and Howard.

The esteemed contralto singer Marian Anderson, discriminated against in the Jim Crow South, won a prestigious Julius Rosenwald Fellowship that allowed her to tour Europe, entertaining heads of state, making headlines in American newspapers and creating "Marian Mania" around the world.

Returning to the United States, she was invited by President Franklin Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt to play the White House in 1936 and, famously, sang "My Country 'Tis of

Thee” from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on Easter Sunday 1939 after being denied the stage of the Daughters of the American Revolution Constitution Hall by segregationists.

Julius Rosenwald was a visionary philanthropist whose philosophy of giving embodied the Jewish concept of *tzedakah* – social justice and charity.

He partnered with African American communities across the South to help build schools for children with limited access to public education.

At one time, one-third of all black students in the South received their education in a Rosenwald School.

It is my hope that the study called for in this bill will ultimately lead to a national historical park linking still-standing Rosenwald schools and calling lasting attention to Rosenwald’s work, which is already showcased in Chicago’s Museum of Science and Industry which many Windy City residents refer to as the Rosenwald Museum after its generous benefactor.

Rosenwald was also the focus of the 2015 documentary film “Rosenwald.”

Julius Rosenwald’s legacy is the enduring social justice he made possible and for which he will be long remembered.